

VZCZCXRO5551
RR RUEHCI
DE RUEHKA #1157/01 1990249
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 180249Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4524
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0036
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9182
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1739
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8012
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 2556
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0834
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//ISA/NESA
RUEKDIA/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J2/J5
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J2/J4/J5

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001157

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO AIAG/HOLLIS SUMMERS, AIAG/TONY NEWTON AND
AIAG/NICHOLAS STUDZINSKI
DELHI PLEASE PASS TO FAS/OLIVER FLAKE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [ELAB](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: FIRSTHAND LOOK AT NORTHWEST DISTRICTS' RESPONSE TO BIRD
FLU

REF: (A) DHAKA 1035, (B) DHAKA 976, (C) DHAKA 776, (D) DHAKA 743,

AND PREVIOUS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. Econoff and EconFSN visited Rangpur, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts located in the northwest corner of Bangladesh July 1 Q 4 to assess in person the GOB response to recent avian influenza outbreaks. The visit showed that some information about avian influenza risks and even about associated programs such as compensation for culled flocks has reached both the technical veterinary officers as well as the general community. Details about the virus, the outbreak, and proper precautions and response are, however, lacking. Likewise, while large-scale commercial poultry farms have the resources to put biosecurity measures in place, these resources are beyond the economic scope of the small, backyard poultry farms and are virtually non-existent among them. Consequently, the outbreak is spreading in the backyard poultry in these districts. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) DISTRICT AND UPAZILA LIVESTOCK OFFICERS. Emboffs met with District and Upazila Livestock Officers in each of the three districts. Each shared many of the same concerns: how to expand education and awareness, whether current compensation plans are adequate, the economic realities of the area and what that means for biosecurity in backyard poultry, and the officers' resource constraints. Chief among the resource complaints was a lack of trained labor, which must be approved through the cumbersome GOB bureaucracy and is a complaint throughout the GOB. The District Livestock Officers admitted using local unskilled labor in culling operations, but said that they used personal protective equipment (PPE). It is, however, unlikely in the extreme that these laborers received any prior training in its proper use. In each district, the Officers were able to produce USAID provided PPE and said they had adequate supplies. The current protocol is to send samples to the regional Field Disease Investigation Laboratory in Jaipurhat for testing, but each of the three District Livestock Officers expressed interest in having testing capacity at their level.

14. (SBU) Likewise, each of the three District Livestock Officers shared their successes. Each felt that they received good support from their District Commissioners and reported that each district had regular meetings of an Avian Influenza Committee made up of livestock and human health officers, law enforcement (Police and Bangladesh Rifles border forces) representatives, and local NGOs.

Based on the 90-day period after culling before a farm can restock with poultry, each District Livestock Officer had proposed some variation on an alternative livelihood plan such as dairy, sheep, goats or cattle.

15. (SBU) BIOSECURITY IN BACKYARD POULTRY. Emboffs visited a range of operational poultry farms. The largest commercial farm visited, VIP Poultry Hatchery, displayed biosecurity measures including a vehicle bath which was long enough to ensure full immersion of each wheel. Emboffs were properly excluded from the area, which included an eight story concrete chicken coop building. With respect to the small, backyard operations, however, in only about a third of those visited was there some form of disinfectant spray used and a foot bath visible; likewise, Emboffs would have been able to enter any area had we attempted to, in violation of good biosecurity practices. Despite prodding from Upazila livestock officers no farm, commercial or backyard, was able to produce a mask or protective clothing used when entering the coops, although admittedly with VIP Poultry, those would have in fact been on the other side of the biosecurity line. On the positive side, the culled farms and houses observed from outside the quarantine area by Emboffs did not appear to have poultry in them at that time.

16. (SBU) COMPENSATION. The District Livestock Officers reported that compensation was being paid out in their areas to culled farms. In all districts, however, both livestock officers and industry representatives indicated concern with the compensation scheme. The flat rate of 70 taka for a commercial bird is on the low end of acceptable for a broiler bird, but for a layer expected to produce eggs over a substantial period (and which does not begin producing until after six months), that rate is inadequate. For hatcheries, where the six month lead time is compounded by a higher cost for the parent or grandparent stock and the resulting live chicks are more valuable than eggs for consumption, the compensation represents

DHAKA 00001157 002 OF 002

about a tenth of the actual investment in the bird. COMMENT. The hatcheries most negatively impacted by this compensation scale are also the commercial operations most able to effectively implement biosecurity procedures for their own protection, so there is some economic rationale to the scheme. END COMMENT.

17. (SBU) ECONOMIC IMPACT / QUARANTINE RISING PRICES. These are rural agricultural areas and are considered economically disadvantaged relative to other areas of Bangladesh. Distant from the highly centralized capital in Dhaka, material costs are high for everything from fuel to disinfectant. A large amount of backyard poultry is raised in this region; in most cases it is not the exclusive source of income for a household but a supplement to other sources of income. As such, backyard poultry is an important tool for alleviating poverty. As a result of the outbreak, Rangpur has closed its borders to the export of poultry and eggs, which has caused localized economic imbalances. Rangpur produced about twice as much chicken as it consumed, and the closure of its borders with neighboring districts such as Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat mean a surplus of product and decreasing price within Rangpur, but a shortage and increasing price elsewhere. Curiously, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari have not closed their borders to poultry products, on the basis that in Rangpur the outbreak sites were within one kilometer of the road where in the other districts the outbreaks were not.

18. (SBU) LACK OF INFORMATION / DESIRE FOR MORE INFORMATION. Emboffs attended a special session of the Rangpur Chamber of Commerce to discuss avian influenza with Chamber of Commerce officers and local poultry farmers. The discussion highlighted the need and desire for additional information in the community. Based on incomplete or inaccurate information, many of the participants asked for the simple way to stop avian influenza, and were not satisfied with Emboff's response "strict culling, effective quarantines, and continuous testing." Some participants even asked why the US has not put all of its resources to developing and distributing a vaccine. Also, the local semantic distinction between avian influenza (only infects birds) and bird flu (the name used when it infects humans) came up again, since apparently a local human health representative ensured them that there is no bird flu

in Bangladesh; an accurate statement when using the local, inappropriate definitions, but very confusing when discussing the topic with people who use the terms correctly and interchangeably.

19. (SBU) COMMENT. The District Livestock Officers were enthusiastic, knowledgeable within their limits and aware of their limits, and realistic about what they could accomplish with their resources. The local community has a broad but shallow awareness of avian influenza and a desire for more specific information. Compensation ranges from barely adequate at the backyard level to wholly inadequate at the large commercial hatchery level, inversely proportionate to the ability of the operation to afford to take effective biosecurity measures. There is qualified support for the GOB culling and quarantine programs, but that support is far from enthusiastic across the board. Additional information and resources about the outbreak in Bangladesh is available on post's avian influenza webpage at: <http://10.208.1.12/dhkavianinfluenza.htm>.

PASI